

STATE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF IOWA
IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The Annals of Iowa

Volume 50 | Number 2 (Fall 1989)

pps. 288-290

A Generation of Boomers: the Pattern of Railroad Labor Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America

ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

"A Generation of Boomers: the Pattern of Railroad Labor Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America." *The Annals of Iowa* 50 (1989), 288-290.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.9395>

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immigration laws were policies that would doom any party seeking support from the working class in America" (222).

Shore has made good use of the Wayland and Haldemann-Julius Collection at the Pittsburg State University Library, Pittsburg, Kansas, which was unavailable to earlier researchers. Thus he is able to probe beyond the face value of socialist publications when dealing with Wayland's techniques and motives. Unlike previous scholars, he has placed *The Appeal to Reason* and its editor-publisher, Julius A. Wayland (and to a lesser degree Fred Warren), within the general context of the development of printing technology and the mass consumer culture of the Populist-Progressive era. Shore makes clear the paper's extent and appeal. Much more than a rural paper, it was once the central institution of the socialist movement. At its peak it had four hundred thousand subscribers and even appeared on the newsstands in the larger cities. Shore's significant book reestablishes the place of Wayland, Warren, and *The Appeal to Reason* as mainstream forces in the development of American socialism.

A Generation of Boomers: The Pattern of Railroad Labor Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America, by Shelton Stromquist. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987. xix, 353 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JANICE L. REIFF, CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

Shelton Stromquist, in *A Generation of Boomers*, challenges his readers to look at late nineteenth-century labor history from a variety of new perspectives. First, he asks his readers to shift their geographic focus from the larger urban areas of the East to the smaller urban areas of Iowa, a shift that he argues reflects the reality of railroad labor agitation. Next, he asks them to look specifically at the railroad workers who provided the impetus for the two largest worker protests in the nineteenth century, the Railroad Strike of 1877 and the Pullman Boycott of 1894. Even more challenging, he places both perspectives into a broad structural framework that considers the railroad industry, the communities in which the workers lived, the recruitment and persistence patterns of the railroad work force, and the life cycle of the workers themselves. From these perspectives, then, he offers new insights into the whole nature of labor protest in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Stromquist finds that the nature of railroad strikes changed in the years between 1877 and 1894. Through the late 1880s, strikes over wages predominated; after that, strikes were more likely to be over

noneconomic issues such as work rules and union recognition or in sympathy with other strikers. At the same time, strike activity moved west, along the railroad system that was rapidly nearing completion.

During those years, both the railroad industry and the railroad network reached a level of economic and organizational maturity. As transcontinental lines neared completion, the demand for ever increasing numbers of new workers waned. The "frontier" outlet for eastern workers closed, and railroad employees throughout the United States found themselves settling into their jobs and their communities. Railroads, too, found themselves in a new position; they could no longer rely on physical expansion as the key to their profits or as a means to manage employees. As a result, they tried to reduce costs by modifying labor policies and by redefining the power relationships between themselves and their workers.

These changes, of course, affected the railroad workers. Because geographic mobility was becoming less desirable, issues affecting the quality of current jobs became more important. Bureaucratic controls that limited movement to higher job categories became more insidious because they added further restrictions on workers' options for their lives. Not surprisingly, the workers demanded more control over their work lives.

Stromquist argues that this demand for control was reinforced by the lives the workers lived away from the job. No longer moving from location to location, workers became part of the communities in which they lived. As they stayed in one place, the mutual commitment between them and the community grew. In fact, Stromquist finds that the support of the citizens in railroad towns became an important factor in the success of actions against the railroads. In towns that had experienced the arbitrary nature of railroad policies and that had a large proportion of railroad employees, strikers could sustain their strikes longer and demand more from the companies.

Stromquist's study is an important contribution to understanding the broad political economy of the railroad industry in general and railroad labor in particular. However, while the book's organization, with each chapter representing one of the structural lines of his framework—such as the pattern of strikes; wages, work rules, and labor supply; town development; and social structure—makes it easy to see the changes in each of the different areas, it is more difficult to see the interplay between them. Also, his reliance on firemen and engineers almost exclusively for making several of his most important arguments about railroad workers raises some questions about the general applicability of all of his conclusions, given the distinctiveness

of the operating and nonoperating employees in the railroad industry. Often he is able to include shopmen, brakemen, switchmen, and other railroad workers, but at critical points he chooses just the men working in the cab.

These criticisms, however, should not be seen as weakening the overall contribution of *A Generation of Boomers*. Stromquist's perspective provides important comparisons for the work other historians are doing in the same period. In tying the different threads into a unified whole, Stromquist has added a new dimension to how we must view the history of the American worker and the labor movement, the history of Iowa, and late nineteenth-century American history in general.

Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World, by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones, and Christopher B. Daly. Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987. xxii, 468 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY JOHN HERBERT ROPER, EMORY AND HENRY COLLEGE

Like a Family is a carefully wrought book which succeeds in creatively unifying a number of disparate, and sometimes even conflicting, subfields of modern social history. Above all else, it accomplishes the virtually impossible by having a committee produce a narrative and an interpretation, both of which are provocative in the best sense of the word. Readers of the *Annals of Iowa* will recognize by the subtitle that the study's subject is southern, even subregional within a belt of the Carolinas Piedmont; but the relevance to national economic policy is obvious, and there are fascinating implications for the ways and means of tracing out the patterns of labor relations and community identity in any area.

In recent years business historians have grown increasingly sophisticated and accomplished in explaining the management policies of the industrial capitalist story after the Panic of 1873. Usually cast in terms of a response by industrial capitalism to a series of disruptions, this interpretation emphasizes creative managerial answers to a collapse of international markets, a failure of the British pound in international exchange, and a drying-up of credit even for well-managed small firms. The result is said to be organizational capitalism, a recognition by certain entrepreneurs that large corporate structures, especially in the context of a new imperialism, could provide an

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